

Memorial Plaques in Urban Space of East-European Cities: Case of Kharkiv

Olga Vovk

*V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University, Kharkiv, UKRAINE
P. T. Tronko Centre for Area Studies*

Sergiy Kudelko

V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University, School of History, Kharkiv, UKRAINE

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Abstract

The present research deals with study of memorial plaques as one of the most widespread commemoration signs in urban space of East-European cities. Kharkiv was selected as an example because of what it is the second largest city in Ukraine, the industrial, scientific, educational and cultural giant that is currently undergoing severe destruction and damage as a result of hostilities. Main species features of memorial plaques as historical sources as well as local history signs are characterized taking into account the Ukrainian traditions of their establishment and existence. Specific attributes that distinguish these objects from other signs of commemoration are emphasized; the authors' scheme of their typology is described. Evolution of trends regarding their visual design and approaches to the formulation of devotional texts are observed in a century-old retrospective (from the 1920s to the 2020s). The local pantheon of heroes whose names were immortalized by plaques is analyzed. Points of the topographic distribution of these objects in the city districts are identified. It is shown that plaques can be markers of political and ideological confrontation in crisis times. It is forecasted in what way may evolve a complex of these commemoration signs in the postwar period in Kharkiv.

Keywords: memorial plaque, commemoration, East Europe, Kharkiv, urban studies.

1. Introduction

Memorial plaques occupy a prominent place by number among the commemoration signs in any modern Eastern European city. Today, though, theoretical and methodological foundations of their research are just at the start of their development. The very question of what we understand as a memorial plaque is uncertain. Depending on the country and its cultural tradition, these objects sometimes contain tombstones (Cooper, 2021), including the graves not only of people but also animals (Auster, Auster-Gussman & Carlson, 2020). Memorial plaques are often confused with annotations (i.e., signs placed on the facades of buildings with information about the person or event in whose honor an element of the road network, institution or organization is named) (Dolganov, 2014).

In this article, the authors use the definition that has become established in Ukrainian monument practice and understand the memorial plaque as a slab of durable stone, metal or polymer material, perpetuating the memory of a person or event and is installed on the facades of buildings and structures related to historical events or the lives and activities of the immortals (Vovk, 2020).

From the point of view of urban planning, memorial plaques are small architectural forms (i.e., small constructions of decorative, auxiliary or other purposes used to improve the aesthetic appearance of public places and urban objects, organization of space, and complement the composition of houses, buildings and their complexes). In terms of monument protection, these are works of monumental sculpture as part of the cultural heritage and, together with other monuments of monumental art, are subject to protection. They are embodied in a specific material form, being signs of conscious perpetuation and are important carriers of cultural memory – that is, they combine material, symbolic and functional components. These features allow them to be included in the number of “places of memory” (Nora, 1989).

Researchers, analyzing the array of memorial plaques in a big city, inevitably face a number of difficulties arising from several features of these signs of commemoration. First, memorial plaques play a supporting role in relation to the buildings where they are installed. Accordingly, understanding of their self-worth as a physical object has not immediately formed even among scholars, which has affected the preservation of attributive information about them. Secondly, small linear dimensions of the boards complicate their identification, cataloging and, as a consequence, further generalization and study. Third, in Ukraine, conciliation procedures and the direct process of installing memorial plaques are relatively simple, and their cost is relatively low. Therefore, the number of these signs of commemoration in the space of modern Ukrainian cities is rapidly growing. At the same time, because of insufficient control over the state of their preservation memorial plaques can not only be quickly installed, but also just as quickly transferred, damaged or dismantled (Vovk, 2021). However, in our opinion, we should not perceive all these specific features of memorial plaques as an obstacle, on the contrary – as an incentive to study them actively.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the array of memorial plaques located in the city of Kharkiv (Ukraine) from the temporal, topographical and substantive points of view and identify patterns of their functioning in the urban space. We choose Kharkiv as the second largest city in Ukraine, industrial, scientific, educational and cultural giant that is currently suffering severe damage as a result of hostilities. Therefore, preservation, study and promotion of its historical and cultural heritage seems more urgent than ever.

2. Method

The authors used principles of historicism, systematics, and interdisciplinarity to achieve this goal. Applying a set of general scientific, special-historical and interdisciplinary methods, the authors achieved compliance with these principles.

The article examines 538 memorial plaques installed in Kharkiv over the past hundred years (from the 1920s to the 2020s). Using the historical-typological method, we systematized them by a number of parameters, such as a year of installation, address, authorship, material, language of the sacred text. The authors offered a number of their own options for systematizing these objects. Thus, according to the object of perpetuation, plaques are proposed to be divided into “personal” (perpetuating the memory of famous people) and “events” (opened in honor of historical or mythologized events). There are also plaques of mixed type, installed in honor of a landmark event in which a certain figure took part. In this study, special memorial plaques were

additionally classified according to the professional and gender affiliation of the immortalized figures.

According to the ratio of textual and visual components, memorial plaques were divided into “textual” (containing only textual inscription) and “visual” (in addition to the text they also contain graphic or relief images, usually a portrait of a perpetuated person).

In turn, we divide “art” plaques according to the level of artistic expression into three types. According to the results of modern psychological research, human brain needs only 13 milliseconds to process illustrations. Moreover, they are perceived immediately as holistic images that do not require verbalization (Potter, Wyble, Hagmann & McCourt, 2014), while it takes at least 250 milliseconds for the brain to recognize a text (Rayner, Schotter, Masson, Potter & Treiman, 2016). So, when a person sees both text and images, his brain will always interpret the image first. Accordingly, it can be assumed that what exactly is depicted on the plaque determines how quickly the viewer will be able to understand in whose honor or what it was unveiled.

The first type of the memorial plaques, in our opinion, should include those where there is a portrait of a person next to the text without any references to his activities or any other professional, personal or other characteristics. When you see such an object, you can immediately guess that the plaque is “personal”, but you have to read the text to learn more about the figure immortalized by it.

The second type includes plaques without a portrait, but with other graphic images: it can be an open book (for writers, teachers or scientists), samples of technology (for engineers), and so on. Memorial plaques of this type allow the viewer to understand quickly what area of human activity was associated with their installation. But to understand what kind of person or event was marked by this sign of commemoration, you need to turn again to the information inscription.

Finally, on the boards of the third type, the visual component includes both a portrait of a perpetuated personality and signs and symbols revealing the qualities that the authors of the plaques consider essential. Here, we propose to include the memorial plaques where a person is depicted in his professional “uniform” (doctor’s hat and white coat, uniform with shoulder straps, etc.). In our opinion, the third type of objects is the most attractive because even a superficial glance at them will be enough to draw a conclusion: the life of a famous doctor, military figure, etc., is connected with this place.

Comparison of memorial plaques according to the above parameters became possible due to the use of historical-comparative method. Applying the historical-genetic method, we traced the evolution of visual and verbal components of the memorial plaques in Kharkiv. The method of diachronic analysis made it possible to identify qualitative stages in the process of increasing the array of these signs of commemoration in urban space. Application of quantitative research methods allowed the authors to increase the accuracy and clarity of the obtained research results. The article uses descriptive-analytical, tabular and graphical methods of presenting information.

Thus, the set of applied principles and research methods allowed us to achieve the goal, ensured the reliability of the analysis and representativeness of the obtained results.

3. Results

Kharkiv is a relatively young European city, founded in the middle of the XVII century (now it is about 370 years old). At the beginning of the twentieth century, there were no samples of monumental sculpture in its space. The first monument appeared in the city in 1904, and the first memorial plaques – in 1928. In almost hundred years that have passed since then, the number

of these commemorative signs has crossed the half-thousand mark (see Figure 1). Hereinafter, calculations are made on the basis of scientific publications (Kudelko et al., 2020a; Kudelko et al., 2020b; Novak et al., 2020).

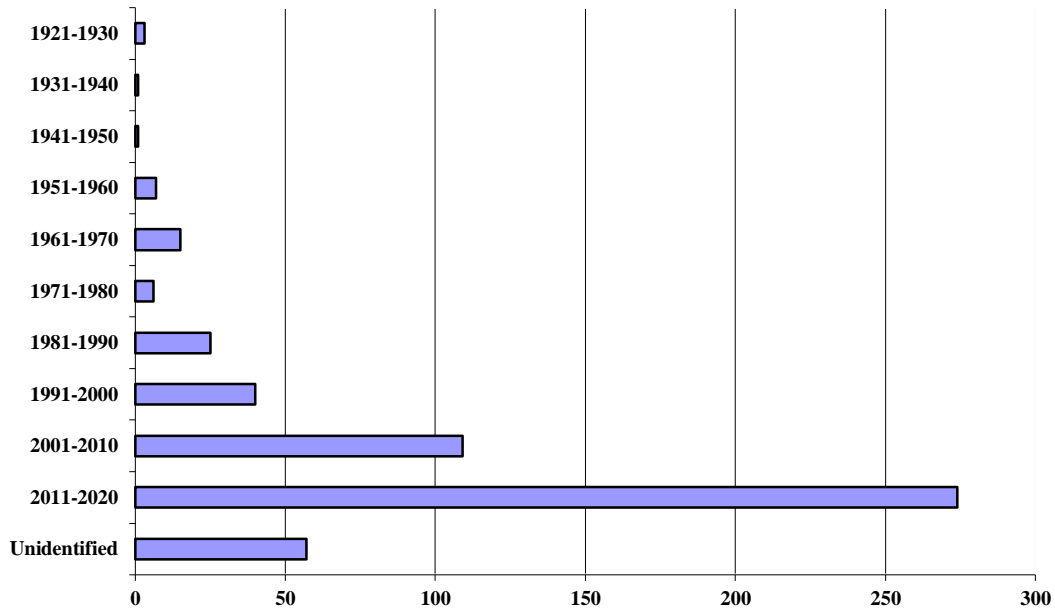


Figure 1. Dynamics of unveiling memorial plaques in Kharkiv (1928-2020)

The first memorial plaques were unveiled in Kharkiv in 1928 in honor of a graduate of Kharkiv University, a prominent physiologist, Nobel Laureate Ilia Mechnikov. Three text-type marble plaques appeared on the walls of the buildings where he once lived and studied. Six years later, in 1934, a plaque was unveiled on the modern Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute building in honor of the Russian poet Volodymyr Maiakovsky. In 1945, another plaque in honor of Ilia Mechnikov was unveiled on the building of the then Veterinary Institute. All these were white marble plaques, mostly of the text type located in the historical center of Kharkiv.

During the Second World War, Kharkiv suffered significantly as a result of hostilities: the total damage amounted to 33.5 billion rubles, the city's population decreased by almost 80%, more than 1 million square meters of housing was burned and destroyed (Kushnarov et al., 2004). Therefore, in the first post-war period, the main efforts were focused mainly on the restoration of civil and industrial buildings. In the 1950s, Kharkiv gradually began to rise from the ruins, and, accordingly, the number of new memorial plaques in it began to increase. This process was especially active in 1956 when the city celebrated its 300th anniversary. At that time, plaques were erected in memory of political events in Soviet history (holding the 9th Congress of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Ukraine, the 3rd and 7th All-Ukrainian Congresses of Soviets, etc.), as well as in honor of cultural figures. Among them are poet Pavlo Grabovsky and theater director Mykola Synelnykov (Ukrainian cultural figures), singer Fedir Shaliapin, literary critic Vissarion Belinsky, playwright Oleksandr Ostrovsky (Russian cultural figures, and others).

The majority of the people immortalized in the 1950s had an indirect relationship with Kharkiv and visited it only temporarily. At the same time, they were public figures or artists known throughout the USSR. It is also noteworthy, that at that time the plaques appeared not only in the city center, but also in some remote areas.

Table 1. The most common themes of Kharkiv memorial plaques in the temporal section (1928–2020)

Period	Science and technology	Culture and art	Social activities	Second World war	Industry	War in Afghanistan
1921–1930	+					
1931–1940		+				
1941–1950	+					
1951–1960		+	+			
1961–1970		+	+	+		
1971–1980	+	+	+	+		
1981–1990	+	+			+	
1991–2000	+	+			+	
2001–2010	+	+			+	
2011–2020	+	+		+		+
Unidentified	+			+		+

In the 1960s, the number of memorial plaques in Kharkiv increased by 12 units. Most of them (4) were opened in honor of the heroes of World War II (among them – Heroes of the Soviet Union Hrygoriy Kovtun and Alexander Zubarev). The second place was taken by plaques erected in honor of the famous state and party leaders (Hrygoriy Petrovsky, Hrygoriy Ordzhonikidze, Valery Mezhlauk), writers (Julius Fuchyky and Mykola Ostrovsky), artists (painter Mykola Samokysch and actor Ivan Marianenko), scientists (academician Petro Budnikov) (see Table 1).

“Visual” plaques gradually replaced the “textual” ones, which was the sign of this decade (ratio 3:7; images of three more plaques have not survived). That is, the means of artistic expression began to supplement text messages more often. In general, the plaques were located in the central part of the city. Now they were installed not only on the walls of public, but also on residential buildings and sometimes on industrial buildings.

In 1971-1980, the number of newly unveiled memorial plaques decreased slightly to only 5 units. At the same time, in 1981-1990, the number of new commemoration signs increased markedly: at that time, 24 units were installed. In particular, the memory of culture and art figures (7), science (6), industry (5), participants in the revolution of 1917 and the Civil War (3) and participants in World War II (3) was immortalized (see Table 1).

In the 1980s, memorial plaques were mostly erected in the central part of Kharkiv. However, while they were located mainly in the old city earlier, now they spread in the area of the new center built in the 1920s-1930s when Kharkiv was the capital of Soviet Ukraine (1919-1934). Thus, in the 1960s the ratio between them was 9:1, in the 1970s-3:1, and in the 1980s-12:9. The number of art plaques increased (17 units or 71% of the total). Moreover, they were not only attractive and original art forms. People could also easily “read” the information posted on them.

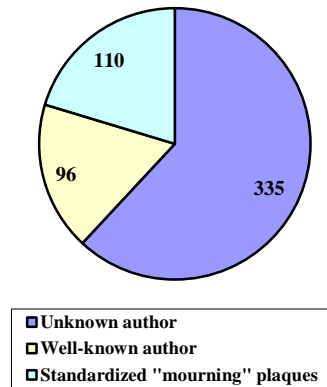


Figure 2. Author's affiliation of memorial plaques in Kharkiv (1928-2020)

We discovered the authorship of the plaques in 10 cases (42% of the total), the largest number compared to all other periods (see Fig. 2). Among those who created memorial plaques in Kharkiv in the 1980s there were well-known artists: The Taras Shevchenko State Prize winner Mykhailo Ovsiankin, professor of architecture, the Corresponding Member of the Ukrainian Academy of Architecture Yevhen Sviatchenko, and others.

In the 1990s, the number of plaques in Kharkiv continued to grow each year, resulting in the opening of 42 new sites. Most of the new plaques (18) were dedicated to cultural and artistic figures. Scientists (14), representatives of industry, in particular, the military-industrial complex (6), participants of the Second World War (2), statesmen of Independent Ukraine (2) were also immortalized (see Table 1).

We can identify several features inherent in Kharkiv memorial plaques of the 1990s. During this period, the initiators and customers of relevant projects became individuals for the first time (often family members of immortalists). Thus, the visual design of the plaques depended primarily on their aesthetic preferences and financial capabilities. As a result, plaques made of dark stone slabs in the technique of photoceramics, traditionally used in Ukraine to decorate tombstones, began to appear on the walls of Kharkiv buildings. In the 1990s, their number was 4 units (about 10% of the total), but in the coming decades, the number and proportion of such "mourning" plaques only increased. However, 8 plaques were created by professional sculptors.

The "text" plaques (2 units) were, in fact, completely supplanted by the "visual" ones (37), which we associate with the "visual turn" in culture. It is interesting that the designers of new signs of commemoration discovered during this period, paid more attention to greater semantic detail of the visual images. For example, a plaque dedicated to the writer Oles Honchar (1996) depicted not a book or a scroll with a pen (symbols of writing, including on Kharkiv commemoration signs), but the outlines of the church as a reference to his famous novel *The Cathedral*. This trend continued in the following decades. For example, while the plaque in honor of the composer Isaac Dunaevsky (1989) depicted a stave with randomly placed notes, the plaque in memory of the singer Klavdia Shulzhenko (2003) showed the singer with a handkerchief in her hands (the song "Blue Handkerchief" from the Second World War became her "business card").

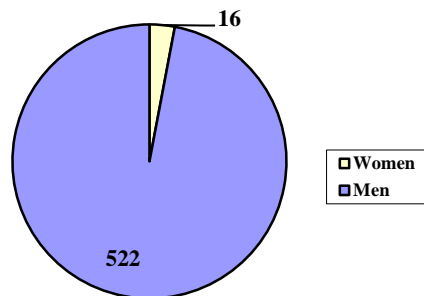


Figure 3. Gender distribution of memorial plaques installed in Kharkiv during 1928-2020.

In the 1990s, plaques in honor of women first appeared in Kharkiv (including actress Valentyna Chystiakova, teacher Khrystyna Alchevska, singer Klavdia Shulzhenko, and poetess Lesya Ukrainka), occupying less than 10% of the total number of objects. “Corporate” complexes of memorial plaques began to form, becoming the decoration of historical and modern territories of Kharkiv University, Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute, Kharkiv Aviation Institute. At the same time, a number of plaques were damaged or destroyed (among them – the plaques to the poet Mykhailo Kulchytsky, Hero of the Soviet Union Israel Fisanovych, etc.). However, at that stage, those were manifestations of domestic vandalism rather than ideological confrontation.

During 2001–2010, the number of memorial plaques in Kharkiv grew rapidly. At that time, 107 new sites were unveiled, exceeding the number of those from the previous period. Almost a third of them were dedicated to scientists (32). The memory of cultural and artistic figures (19), public figures (13), representatives of industry (12), participants of the Second World War (10), health care workers (7), education (3) figures of religion and the church (3), soldiers-internationalists (2) was also immortalized (see Table 1).

In 2010, rapid increase in memorial plaques in Kharkiv continued. 271 new facilities appeared in the city at that time. The largest number of them was dedicated to participants in various military conflicts and law enforcement officers. Thus, in 2013, on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Kharkiv from the Nazis (1943), 95 typical memorial plaques were unveiled in all districts of the city in honor of Heroes of the Soviet Union and full Knights of the Order of Glory, who lived here. According to the decision of the Executive Committee of Kharkiv City Council of January 17, 2018, 49 plaques were unveiled in honor of Soviet soldiers killed in Afghanistan during the 1979-1989 war. 4 memorial plaques of Kharkiv reflected the events of the Revolution of Dignity 2013-2014. Kharkiv memorial space reflected the hostilities in eastern Ukraine, too: 12 plaques appeared in the city in honor of the fallen participants in these military events, 27 plaques in honor of scientists, the same number – in honor of artists. 11 plaques were opened in honor of managers and employees of industrial enterprises of Kharkiv region and medical workers; 6 plaques each – in honor of educators and architects. For the first time, memorial plaques in honor of athletes were unveiled, there are 4 of them (see Fig. 4).

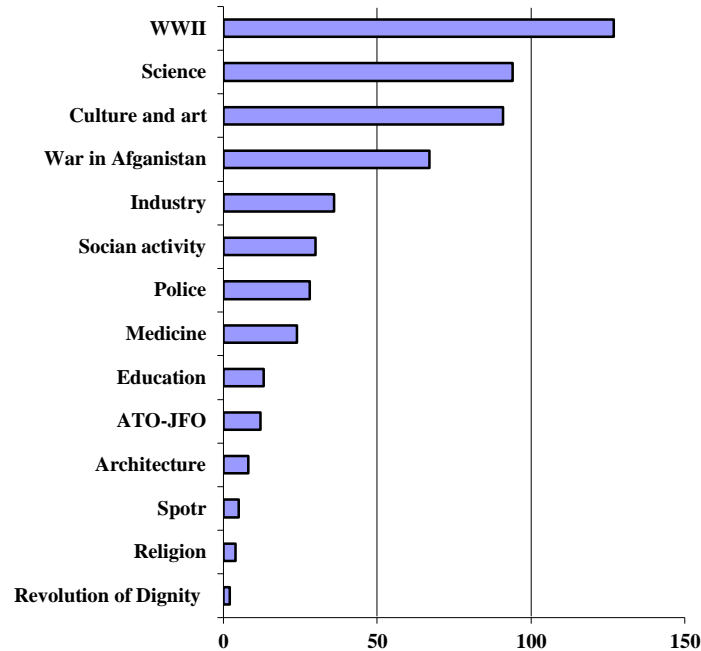


Figure 4. Thematic distribution of memorial plaques installed in Kharkiv during 1928-2020.

Among the public figures in whose honor memorial plaques were unveiled in 2010, were both local activists (Kharkiv Mayor Yuriy Gurovoy) and all-Ukrainian (dissident, General Petro Hryhorenko) and international figures (Polish statesman and military figure Józef Pilsudski). A religious figure – Metropolitan of Kharkiv and Bohodukhiv Nikodim (Rusnak) was also immortalized.

In connection with the implementation of the Law of Ukraine “On Condemnation of Communist and National Socialist (Nazi) Totalitarian Regimes in Ukraine and Prohibition of Propaganda of Their Symbols,” adopted in 2015, a number of plaques were removed.

In some cases, the question of whether a memorial object in honor of a figure has the right to be in the city has caused considerable public outcry. In particular, the greatest confrontation arose around the memorial plaque in honor of the literary critic Yuri Shevelyov. Apologists for its establishment emphasized the significant scientific achievements of this figure, while opponents appealed to the fact that during World War II, he cooperated with the occupying Nazi authorities. Finally, in September 2013, the plaque to this figure was installed, but unknown individuals soon torn it down and broke. In 2010, they demolished a memorial plaque to the figure of the late 19th – early 20th centuries, historian-monarchist of right-wing radical views Andriy Vyazygin, etc.

Vandals torned or damaged a number of plaques, as in previous years, (plaques in honor of the poet Pavel Tychyna, public figure Valery Meshcheriakov, etc.). Some were removed during the reconstruction of buildings, not being returned to the previous place. Among them – plaques on the facade of Kharkiv National Medical University etc.) dedicated to outstanding medical scientists Volodymyr Vorobyov, Lyubov Malaia, Oleksandr Palladin.

The exact date of another 57 Kharkiv memorial plaques could not be established (see Fig. 1).

In 2022, during the military events in Ukraine related to the aggression of the Russian Federation, the city began a spontaneous process of dismantling monuments somehow connected

with Russian and Soviet culture. In particular, a memorial plaque in honor of Soviet military leader Vasyl Blukher was demolished in Kharkiv in April 2022.

4. Discussions

There are a number of trends inherent in the memorial plaques of Kharkiv in the early 21st century. These signs of commemoration, which were mostly perceived as neutral until the beginning of the 21st century, later became the society's markers of ideological polarization. The processes of establishing and removing some of them caused a significant public response, which ultimately deepened the confrontation between controversial groups. As we see from the publication (Damcevic, 2021), in the 2010s similar processes were in the countries of the former Yugoslavia, in particular in Croatia.

The vast majority of plaques installed at all times in Kharkiv had texts written in Ukrainian; Russian language was the second in terms of distribution. For example, for facilities opened before the 2000s, the ratio was about 3: 1 (in particular, texts in Russian were on plaques erected in honor of production organizers, developers of knowledge-intensive technologies, as well as participants in World War II). In the 21st century, the trend has generally persisted, but in a number of cases, there appeared parallel texts in the languages of other nations (Hebrew, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, etc.). Perpetuating the memory of different nationalities with the help of memorial plaques is not only a marker of the city's polyethnicity and multiculturalism. It can also be an additional factor in increasing the tourist attractiveness of the city (Kazimierczak, 2010).

Some of the memorial plaques installed in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, indicated the initiators and customers of their installation. That is, the plaques began to serve additionally as a tool for self-presentation of these and other organizations in the urban space. We see a similar situation in other cities of Ukraine, in particular in Rivne where glorification practices related to memorial plaques are a tool of media attention to the organization (Dolganov, 2014).

In some cases, the visual design of memorial plaques began to act as a similar tool to some extent. For example, a plaque commemorating Xenia Iliadi, opened with the direct participation of the Greek national community in Kharkiv, depicts a meander, the font in the information inscription is stylized in Hellenic. Thus, the means of visual expression emphasize first of all the ethnic origin of this woman, not the fact that she was a doctor by profession and a member of the Resistance Movement (although this is all described in the dedication). Thus, a polymodal text was created. Verbal and nonverbal components in it were in complex interaction, forming a multi-vector image of the immortalized person (Besedina, Burkova, & Nalivaiko, 2020).

At the turn of the 20th–21st centuries, Kharkiv perpetuated the memory of events and figures of long-gone times (18th–19th centuries) and the processes that took place in the recent past. Moreover, the time lag between the time of the event and its immortalization in the memorial plaque, was significantly reduced. Thus, in the middle of the twentieth century, this “gap” was about 20 years for the Second World War, about 15 years for the war in Afghanistan in the late twentieth century. It was 2 years maximum for current political events in Ukraine after 2013-2014 (see Table 1). According to the research in other cities in Eastern Europe, the time from the death of an individual to the perpetuation of his memory by installing a plaque reduces and is actually 1 to 5 years (Barannikova, 2017).

Understanding of who is worthy of being immortalized in a memorial plaque has expanded. In particular, for the first time the relevant objects were installed in honor of religious figures, athletes, photographers and cinematographers, architects (see Fig. 4). At the beginning of the 21st century memorial plaques began to immortalize not only figures of world and national

importance (Nobel laureates, heads of state, etc.), but also local figures (city council deputies, heads and employees of local enterprises and organizations).

Interestingly, in some cases, in addition to traditional data (name of the immortalized person, date of life and professional merit), personal characteristics were mentioned in the text of the plaques. For example, the artist Alexander Serdyuk was called “a man of great soul”, the rector of Kharkiv Aviation Institute Mykola Maslennikov – “a man of crystal honesty”.

In general, judging by the quantitative ratio of memorial plaques erected at all times in Kharkiv, we can say that Kharkiv experienced many tragic and heroic events during World War II. It is an important center of science and culture, as well as other industries and non-productive sphere, which are actively developing in it and occupy a worthy place (see Table 1 and Fig. 4).

At the same time, there are fewer plaques in honor of women than men: in the general array, their number currently does not exceed 3%. It is true that it increases every decade (e.g, 4 such plaques were unveiled in the 1990s, 5 in the 2000s, and 7 in the 2010s), but the pace of this growth is, of course, incomparable with the overall number of commemoration signs (see Fig. 3). A similar situation is, for example, in Bulgarian capital Sofia, where memorial plaques in honor of women are few and account for a small proportion of all similar sites in the city (Nazarska, 2013). In Croatian capital, Zagreb, intra-city commemoration signs, including memorial plaques, also show a predominantly patronymic narrative, manifested not only in frequency but also in the spatial distribution and forms of female images representation (Vretenar, & Krajina, 2016).

The vast majority of Kharkiv memorial plaques are quite attractive. In particular, only 32 of them are “text” (slightly more than 6% of the total). In their design, the artists used different means of expression, depending on the subject. For example, there is an emblem of medicine (snake with a bowl) on the plaques in memory of doctors. In addition, they sometimes reproduce graphic symbols directly related to the specialization of the person – for example, on the plaque of a cardiologist, Academician Lyubov Malaia you can see a cardiogram.

In some cases, using visual series, the authors supplemented the biographical information about the immortalized person. Thus, on the memorial plaque to the head of Kharkiv water supply and sewerage enterprises Ivan Korinko you can see the image of the fourth power unit of the Chernobyl NPP and the main pumping station of Dykaniv sewage treatment plants (Kharkiv). That is, non-verbal symbols show that this figure was involved in the elimination of man-made disasters at the named production infrastructure. Therefore, we see an increase in the information content of the nonverbal component of memorial plaques (Besedina et al., 2020).

You find ornaments and other symbols, indicating the nationality of the immortalized person in some places on memorial plaques. The most common are Ukrainian ornaments, used as an element of decoration of the plaque itself or as a detail of clothing (embroidered shirt) on the portrait of the immortalized person. They are primarily found at sites that perpetuate the memory of those directly involved in the study and promotion of Ukrainian history and culture (artist Mykola Samokysh, 1962; artist Ivan Maryanenko, 1969; musician and writer Hnat Khotkevych, 1991; historian Dmytro Yavornytsky, 2005; writer and public figure Ivan Franko, 2011, etc.), less often – politicians like Vyacheslav Chornovil, 2002.

From a topographical point of view, the memorial plaques in Kharkiv are presented unevenly. In some areas (historical, not administrative) there is no such sign of commemoration. These are the areas with mostly one-story private buildings. The vast majority of memorial plaques are concentrated in the city center, while in the “sleeping areas” they are single. This trend is characteristic not only of Kharkiv, but also of most other cities in Central and Eastern Europe (Barannikova, 2017; Kazimierzczak, 2010). On the one hand, this is determined by the specifics of infrastructure development of large cities, where the vast majority of office buildings, science, education, culture, as well as prestigious housing is concentrated in the center.

On the other hand, as practice shows, the customers of memorial plaques if they have a choice of the installation place (for example, in the city center where the person worked or in the residential area where he lived), often prefer central locations. The authors of memorial plaques (sculptors, architects) also choose locations in the city center, considering them more prestigious for the presentation of their work. Customers use a range of considerations: from the strategy of “reaching the audience” (in the city center more locals and visitors will see it than on the outskirts) to aesthetic (an elegant memorial plaque on a five-story panel building will not look as good as on the old buildings in the city center), and purely practical (it is more difficult to preserve and save the plaque in a remote area, especially one made of precious metal than on the city center). Thus, the placement of memorial plaques in the central part of the city is justified in terms of their safety, given the vulnerability of these signs of commemoration as physical objects (Sauber, 1993).

In the “sleeping areas” of Kharkiv, there are mostly memorial plaques in honor of local residents who took part in World War II or died during other military conflicts – including the war in Afghanistan or the ATO-JFO in eastern Ukraine. Of course, sometimes there are other cases. For example, a plaque of actress Vira Kharytonova is installed on the house in the Volunteer street, 56 (Holodna Gora), where she lived, but it looks more like an exception to the rule.

At the same time, memorial plaques in remote areas are installed on the territory of the enterprises, scientific institutes, hospitals, sports and other establishments of industrial and non-industrial sphere. To some extent, they determine the micro-level specifics of the “pantheons” of local heroes. As for the central part of Kharkiv, the topographic distribution of personal memorial plaques is more subject to the logic of the historical development of the city. Thus, in the oldest part of the city (University Street, Rymarska Street, etc.) there are plaques in honor of figures of the late 18th – early 19th centuries (Hrygory Skovoroda, Vasyl Karazin, etc.). The same district, as well as the beginning of Sumska and Pushkinska streets, Poltavsky Shliakh and adjacent streets, the construction of which continued in the 19th – early 20th centuries, have largely become a perpetuation place of famous figures of the period. Most of them were representatives of university science, education, culture, public figures (among them – surgeon Apollinarius Podrez, linguist Alexander Potebnya, film entrepreneur Dmitry Kharytonov, singer Fedir Shaliapin, pioneer of aeronautics Lev Matsievich, etc.). The “places of memory” here are not only the buildings where these and other figures lived, studied or worked, but also the institutions they visited from time to time (for example, on tour).

Development of Kharkiv during the first half of the twentieth century, which continued particularly actively in the northern direction (the far part of Sumska and Pushkinska streets, Freedom Square and the area behind Gosprom, etc.) determined the list of persons whose lives were associated with these areas and whose names were later immortalized there. Among them were Soviet political, party and military leaders (Valery Mezhlauk, etc.), but mostly engineering and technical workers (Mykhailo Koshkin, Konstantyn Chelpan, etc.), representatives of the creative intellectuals (Ostap Vyshnia and Vasyl Chechviansky, Pavlo Tychyna and others). In the second half of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries such well-known figures of literature, culture and art as Serhiy Besedin, Mark Karminsky, Borys Chichibabin, and scientists Ivan Bulankin, Borys Verkin, Olexii Pogorelov, some others, lived and worked in these areas (which is reflected in a range of memorial plaques installed here). Thus, the spatio-temporal distribution of memorial plaques demonstrates the territorial growth of the city over time and reflects zones of materialized memory concentration (Barannikova, 2017).

It is also worth noting that public institutions located in the center of Kharkiv (primarily educational and scientific institutions, to a lesser extent cultural institutions), as well as organizations located “on the outskirts” of the city, are tangible “centers of gravity” in the territory where there is a significant number of memorial plaques. At the same time, most of them were installed in the first two decades of the 21st century. We assume that this trend is one of the manifestations of the struggle for symbolic capital, typical of most cities of modern Ukraine. They

can potentially be converted into other types of capital, and in the long-run, can bring tangible dividends to its owner.

5. Conclusions

Memorial plaques of Kharkiv are a clear marker of historical epochs. Their repertoire, dynamics and topography of placement, other attributes allow us not only to see the trends in commemorative practices of central and local government, civic initiatives, but also to trace changes in artistic preferences, shifting collective interests, struggle for ideological dominance in the city, analyze many global processes (emancipation of women, increasing the importance of sports, etc.). Comparing our data with information from other major cities in Ukraine and Eastern Europe, helps us better understand the processes in this macro-region. The events of world historical significance (two world wars, great revolutions, etc.) took place and unfolded there over the past hundred years. The memorial plaques of Kharkiv reflect, like in a drop of water, the great heroic and tragic history of this city, its international relations, political and artistic preferences, what we call the self-reflection of the city's residents.

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